When the World Says "No"

When 19th century clergyman Henry Ward Beecher – social reformer and speaker – was a young boy in school, he learned a powerful lesson in self-confidence.

He was called to stand and recite in front of the class. He had hardly begun when the schoolteacher interrupted with an emphatic, "No!" The startled boy began again. After a moment, the teacher once more thundered, "No!"

Now humiliated, the student sat down. Confused and irritated, young Henry Beecher complained to the teacher, "I recited just as he [the student before] did."

But the instructor replied, "It is not enough to know your lesson, you must be sure. When you allowed me to stop you, it meant that you were uncertain. If all the world says, 'No!' it is your business to say, 'Yes!' and prove it."

That story should strike a chord within each of us. Isn't it true that the world says "No!" in a thousand ways, such as …

- "No! You can't do that."
- "No! You are wrong."
- "No! You are too young."
- "No! You are too old."
- "No! You aren't strong enough."
- "No! You can't do it that way."
- "No! You don't have the right education"
- "No! You'll never succeed."

And each "No!" you hear has the potential to erode your confidence bit by bit until you quit altogether.

Ralph Waldo Emerson – American essayist and poet – said it best: "To be yourself in a world that is constantly trying to make you something else is the greatest accomplishment."

The world may say "No!" but if you have a bigger "Yes!" burning deep inside, the world won't know what to do with you.

I can do all things through Him who strengthens me (Philippians 4:13 ESV).

– Beecher Hunter